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COMMUNITY COLLEGES IN BRITAIN.

BY- EISENHAUER, LOUIS

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WHILE BRITAIN HAS NO PARALLEL TO THE AMERICAN MULTIPURPOSE COMMUNITY COLLEGE, THE PURPOSE OF SUCH AN INSTITUTION IS SERVED BY A VARIETY OF FORMS OF "COLLEGES OF FURTHER EDUCATION," EACH WITH ITS OWN INDIVIDUAL CHARACTER AND PURPOSE. THEY MAY BE LOCAL, AREA, REGIONAL, OR NATIONAL. THEY INCLUDE COLLEGES OF ART, AGRICULTURE, AND COMMERCE, AS WELL AS TECHNICAL COLLEGES. ENTRY IS OPEN TO ALL, AND STUDENTS MAY PROGRESS IN ACCORDANCE WITH THEIR TIME, ABILITY, AND EFFORT. THE CURRICULAR RANGE IS FROM SECONDARY REMEDIAL STUDIES TO UNIVERSITY LEVEL PROGRAMS. SOME COLLEGES OFFER WORK LEADING TO A UNIVERSITY DEGREE, AND A WIDE VARIETY OF DIPLOMAS AND CERTIFICATES IS AVAILABLE. MOST OF THESE AWARDS REQUIRE BOTH LIBERAL AND TECHNICAL STUDIES. THE COLLEGES UTILIZE A LEGALLY SUPPORTED LIAISON AMONG BRITISH INDUSTRY, BUSINESS, GOVERNMENT, PROFESSIONS, AND THE TECHNICAL COLLEGES. THIS ARTICLE IS PUBLISHED IN "JUNIOR COLLEGE JOURNAL," VOLUME 38, NUMBER 5, FEBRUARY 1968. (WO)

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Community Colleges In Britain

Senior students pause for a chat in front of Llandaff Technical College, which is located in Cardiff, Britain.

The Further Education System Shows A Remarkable Range of Programs With Appropriate Awards

By Louis Eisenhauer

There are no multipurpose community colleges in Britain strictly comparable to those in the United States. What Britain does provide for students who do not matriculate at a university or a teacher's college is an extraordinary variety of "colleges of further education" which both parallel and extend beyond the current range of American community junior colleges.

Conveniently called "technical colleges," though not without strong objections, these institutions may be either local, area, regional, or national; and, within these groupings, can be found colleges of art, agriculture, and commerce as well as colleges specifically geared to technical or craft programs. They offer full-time, part-time, and "sandwich"* education for persons over the legal school-leaving age (now fifteen), excluding, of course, students still in secondary schools. As Tyrell Burgess notes ruefully in *A Guide to English Schools* (Penguin, 1964), "Any account of further and higher education in England and Wales (Scotland is a world largely to itself) . . . is like the vegetation of South America: it contains anything you can think of."

At the end of 1966 there were over 700 further education institutions in England and Wales with a total enrollment of more than 1.5 million. By 1969-70, according to the Labor Party's national plan, enrollment will top 2.1 million. Anthony Crosland, until 1967 secretary of state for education and science, has said that "further education is the fastest growing sector of the entire British educational system."

A summary of the historical background of these colleges is given in *Reports on Education* (no. 2, revised, April 1966) issued by the Department of Education and Science:

> The structure of technical education has been much developed and reorganized following the White Papers of 1956 and 1961. The first of these drew attention to the challenge to our technical education represented by that of other countries. A similar document appeared more than a century ago in 1853, and in 1857 the new Education Department was constituted to do something about it. . . . Much of the pioneering work was done by unofficial bodies such as the City and Guilds of London Institute. . . . In the last years of the century, polytechnics, technical institutions, and science schools were going up all over the place (mostly financed by "whisky money").
>
> In a Bill in 1918 there is reference to compulsory day continuation schools for fourteen—sixteen-year-olds in employment. More significant . . . was the 1921 scheme . . . for National Certificates. . . . The 1944 Education Act, after providing for primary and secondary education, went on to make it a duty of local education authorities to provide "full-time and part-time education for persons over compulsory school age."

Perhaps the philosophy of the British technical colleges is best put in the same publication: "Entry

* Sandwich courses consist of alternating periods of not less than nineteen weeks of full-time study (it may be more) in a technical college and of supervised experience in industry, usually extending over a number of years. Students may also attend these colleges on "day-release" or "block-release" schedules, meaning they are encouraged by their employer to take off from their jobs (with pay) and attend classes for varying periods of time.

is open to all, and students may advance as far as time, talent, and application can carry them."

Two significant differences between further education colleges in Britain and American community junior colleges should be emphasized: *some* of the British colleges offer work leading to a university degree or its equivalent; and a large number and bewildering variety of diplomas and certificates are available to further education students.

Assuming they have the necessary entrance qualifications, similar to those expected by the universities, students at selected technical colleges may study for a B.A. or B.S. degree, and even continue to postgraduate work. The degrees are awarded by the Council for National Academic Awards (C.N.A.A.), established by royal charter in 1964 especially to bestow degrees and other academic distinctions to persons taking approved programs *outside* the universities. External degrees may also be earned from London University by further education students.

Students with academic credentials not quite so strong, or who are not interested in a normal degree, may study for the higher national diploma (H.N.D.), which is recognized by industry, government, and the professions as a substantial achievement. Other diplomas and certificates available (each with varying entrance requirements and curriculums) are the higher national certificate (H.N.C.), the ordinary national diploma (O.N.D.), and the ordinary national certificate (O.N.C.). Additionally, there are numerous specialized certificates granted by the city and guilds of London and certain grades and professions.

Subjects taken for these awards range from building and business studies through engineering (of all types) and printing to retailing and textiles; and the awards carry with them clearly understood economic and social benefits. To the American and, not infrequently, to the native Briton, this profusion of degrees and diplomas and certificates is confusing. But such a system has the advantage of spelling out precisely what the student has studied and how far he has ventured. Contrast this with the catch-all ambiguity of the A.A. or A.S. degrees usually granted by American community colleges.

General (Liberal) Studies

Like American educators, the British are concerned with the risks and limitations of a narrow, vocational training for technicians and technologists (in Britain the latter are always degree-level) who will surely constitute the bulk of tomorrow's citizenry in both countries. Most of the award-granting groups, backed strongly by the Department of Education and Science, insist that a modicum of general liberal studies (typically literature, history, art, music, social studies) infuse the otherwise specialized curriculums. Oddly enough, little attention is given to assuring that a similar smattering of math and science is also integrated into those programs which do not as a matter of course feature them.

In actual practice the amount and makeup of required general studies varies markedly from one college to another since each responds to "local" industrial and professional pressures. The courses offered also vary, generally being adapted to the needs of a specific curriculum, e.g., an English course in a business studies program would stress business communications. The serious reservations about "multitrack" courses held by many faculty members in American community colleges would not be relevant in Britain, because the programs and awards are so clearly labeled and the vexing question of transferring credits to a senior institution does not arise.

Recent Developments

The growth and character of British technical colleges are being greatly influenced by two important developments: the passage by Parliament in 1964 of the Industrial Training Act, which requires industries, at their own expense, through representative boards, to insure that enough people are trained to meet the future needs of the industries; and the proposal in 1966 by Anthony Crosland, then secretary for education in the British Cabinet, that a number of major educational centers, "polytechnics," be established within the further education system to complement the universities and colleges of education.

An extended analysis of the Industrial Training Act would require a separate article; suffice it to say that for the technical colleges the impact of the act is to encourage hundreds of thousands of potential students to take time from work, with pay, and return for varying periods of time to the colleges. The facilities and faculties of the colleges will be taxed to cope not only with the numbers but the new and different programs they demand.

To understand the proposal for polytechnics it is necessary to know that higher education in England operates within what is called a "binary system." As Mr. Crosland put it in a controversial speech two years ago, "on the one hand we have . . . the autonomous sector, represented by the universities, in whose ranks . . . I now include the colleges of advanced technology. On the other hand we have the public sector, represented by the leading technical colleges and the colleges of education."

From the ranks of the technical colleges (the pub-

lic sector) polytechnics would be developed as "comprehensive academic communities" for full-time, sandwich, and part-time students at all levels of higher education. "As mixed communities of full-time and part-time teachers and students they will . . . have closer and more direct links with industry, business, and the professions."

Mr. Crosland and his supporters see the polytechnics as institutions which will meet the increasing demand for higher education without setting up more universities. His critics see them as means to assert more direct social (that is, political) control over higher education.

One undesirable effect of the new proposal, pointed out by the Association of Teachers in Technical Institutes, may be to drain scarce talent and resources from those colleges not selected as polytechnics and thus damage badly the whole further education system. Mr. Crosland and his successor are likely to prevail. The experiment should be of interest to American community college leaders who may themselves one day have to decide whether they should extend their programs beyond the current associate degree level.

Although it does not affect directly the technical colleges, another recent development in British education of interest to American community colleges is the "sixth form college." Since advanced study for those who have passed their ordinary level examinations (roughly sixteen — eighteen-year-olds) requires a variety of specialized courses, many secondary schools do not have sufficient students to establish variable sixth forms. The Department of Education and Science has recommended to the local education authorities that sixth form colleges which would pool students from several secondary schools in an area may be a solution to this problem. To date few of these institutions exist. Interestingly, if a sixth form college were merged with a less than degree level technical college the result would certainly resemble an American community college.

In Sum

What does the further education system in Britain offer to American community colleges?

Three points come to mind: first, the extraordinary range of programs coupled with their appropriate awards; second, the legally supported liaison between British industry, business, government, and the professions and the technical colleges; and third, the range of the colleges, extending from secondary school "remedial" work to university degree level.

Above all, an examination of the colleges of further education in Britain emphasizes the singular contribution of such colleges to a modern society, and confirms one's belief in the functions and goals of American community junior colleges.

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